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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives

Discussion guide for the high-level round table on the elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls

Note by the Secretariat

I. Introduction

1. At its fiftieth session, in 2006, the Commission decided that the annual interactive high-level round table would focus on experiences, lessons learned and good practices in relation to the implementation of previous commitments made with regard to the priority theme of the annual session (Economic and Social Council resolution 2006/9, para. 3).

II. Organizational matters

A. Theme

2. The high-level round table will focus on the priority theme of the fifty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women, "Elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls" (Economic and Social Council resolution 2009/15, para. 2 (d)).

B. Participants

3. The high-level round table provides an opportunity for high-level representatives of Member States attending the fifty-seventh session of the Commission to engage in dialogue and share experiences and lessons learned. The representatives may include: ministers of women's affairs; heads of national mechanisms for gender equality; and senior officials from other relevant ministries, such as those of family and children's affairs, health, education, justice, community services, foreign affairs and finance, as well as national statistical offices. The round table will be open to other members of the Commission and observers.

C. Timing

4. The high-level round table will be held at United Nations Headquarters in New York on Monday, 4 March 2013, from 3 to 6 p.m.

D. Format

5. To allow for interaction among as many participants as possible, the round table will be conducted simultaneously in two parallel meetings on the same theme.

6. The Chairs of the two parallel meetings will guide the discussions with a view to promoting the interactive nature of the round table. Interventions shall not exceed three minutes. Speakers will be encouraged to ask questions and offer comments on interventions made during the dialogue. Written statements are strongly discouraged.

7. A senior official from an entity of the United Nations system and a representative of civil society will provide comments at the end of the dialogue. The Chairs will then close the meetings.

E. Outcome

8. The outcome of the high-level round table will be presented in a summary by the Chair.

III. Elements for discussion in the high-level round table

A. Background

9. The issues covered in the Commission's priority theme for 2013 have, to different degrees and from particular perspectives and approaches, been part of past intergovernmental discussions and outcomes. The main policy instruments and guidance are summarized below.

10. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women provides the overarching framework for addressing discrimination. The work of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women provides a clear interpretation of the Convention by explicitly recognizing violence

prevent and respond to violence under various articles in the Convention (see general recommendation Nos. 12 and 19). Specific obligations are also contained in the C ıvention on the Rights of the Child, which requires States to take measures to protect girls from violence (see articles 19 and 34).

11. In the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women,[1] Governments were called upon to take integrated measures to prevent and eliminate violence against women. In the Platform for Action, Governments were specifically called upon to ratify and/or implement international human rights instruments, including the Convention, taking into account general recommendation No. 19, and to adopt and/or implement legislation for eliminating violence against women that emphasizes the prevention of violence, the prosecution of offenders, measures to ensure the protection of women subjected to violence, access to just and effective remedies and the rehabilitation of perpetrators. They were also called upon to formulate and implement policies and programmes that provide women subjected to violence with access to mechanisms of justice and to adopt all appropriate measures, especially in the field of education, to modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women and to eliminate prejudices, customary practices and all other practices based on the idea of the inferiority or superiority of either of the sexes and on stereotyped roles for men and women.

12. The Platform for Action stressed the need to formulate and implement, at all relevant levels, plans of action to eliminate violence against women and allocate adequate resources within Government budgets. It called for the provision of a range of services and responses, including well-funded shelters, medical, psychological and other counselling services and free or low-cost legal aid, and the creation of institutional mechanisms so that women and girls can report acts of violence against them in a safer and confidential environment. In the Platform for Action, Governments were called upon to ensure the accessibility of services for specific groups of women, such as migrant women and women with disabilities, and to disseminate information on the assistance available to women and families who are victims of violence.

13. In the Platform for Action, regional and international organizations, including the United Nations system, and international financial institutions and other actors, including the private sector, trade unions, non-governmental organizations and other civil society actors, were called upon to support Governments in responding to and preventing violence against women.

14. The General Assembly, in previous resolutions on violence against women, including the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (resolution 48/104) and on the intensification of efforts to eliminate violence against women (resolutions 61/143, 62/133, 63/155, 64/137 and 65/187), called for holistic approaches to addressing violence through comprehensive legislation, coordination mechanisms at all levels of Government, well-funded national policies and action plans, the provision of a range of multisectoral services and responses for protection and prevention, capacity-building for professionals involved in responding to and preventing violence against women and girls and data collection and research. The

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[1] *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations

Assembly has acknowledged the universal pervasiveness and impact of violence and stressed that violence against women and girls is a violation of human rights. The Human Rights Council has also, in various resolutions (for example, resolutions 14/12, 17/11 and 20/12), recognized the universality and consequences of violence against women and called upon Governments to implement holistic and comprehensive responses to eliminating and preventing violence, while stressing the due diligence standards for such measures.

15. Various agreed conclusions adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women addressed issues related to violence against women and girls. The Commission addressed the need for protection and support for women and girls who are subjected to violence in its agreed conclusions of 1998 on violence against women (see E/1998/27-E/CN.6/1998/12 and Corr.1) and the need for comprehensive services on the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child in its agreed conclusions of 2007 (E/2007/27-E/CN.6/2007/9, para. 14.9 (c)).

B. Discussion guide

16. During the round table, high-level representatives of Member States are expected to focus on actions taken, lessons learned, achievements and good practices, as well as gaps and challenges, with supporting data, where available, with respect to the implementation at the national level of commitments on the priority theme. The reports of the Secretary-General on multisectoral services and responses for violence against women and girls and the prevention of violence against women and girls (to be issued as E/CN.6/2013/3 and E/CN.6/2013/4, respectively) present relevant issues related to the priority theme of the fifty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women. The meeting participants will discuss actions undertaken and results achieved in:

(a) Addressing the root causes of violence against women and girls and attitudes, beliefs and behaviours that legitimize, exacerbate or condone such violence;

(b) Developing and expanding partnerships with civil society organizations and the private sector and engaging different segments of society in preventing violence against women and girls;

(c) Developing and expanding the full range of coordinated multisectoral services and responses to address the multidimensional impacts of violence against women and girls;

(d) Increasing access to multisectoral services and responses for all women and girls, including women and girls who face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination;

(e) Establishing mechanisms to ensure the implementation of commitments and agreements at the national level, including the provision of adequate resources, and developing effective monitoring and evaluation processes for assessing the effectiveness of laws and policies.